

# THE MILITANT

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Washington uses crisis to push  
for pro-US gov't in Venezuela  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 80/NO. 21 MAY 30, 2016

## Join Socialist Workers Party campaigning coast to coast

BY MAGGIE TROWE

“The Socialist Workers Party’s experience in campaigning from Philadelphia to New Jersey to Washington state is that when we go to workers on their doorsteps, they want to discuss what is the way forward,” Mary Martin, SWP candidate for governor in Washington, reported May 17. “They give a hearing to our party’s perspectives and program. Many want to try out our newspaper, the *Militant*, pick up a book on revolutionary politics from Pathfinder Press, and help us get our party on the ballot.”

Martin filed to be on the ballot in Olympia, the state capitol, the same day.

Workers reject President Barack Obama’s claim that the U.S. “right now has the strongest, most durable economy in the world.” They are looking for a way forward out of the grinding depression conditions they face in today’s feeble economic recovery — including low pay, unsafe working conditions and degrading treatment.

The government’s list of what they

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## A month into strike, Verizon workers reach for solidarity

BY CANDACE WAGNER

NEW YORK — Unionists at Verizon entered the second month of their strike standing strong and reaching out for solidarity.

Some 39,000 members of the Communication Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers walked off the job April 13 in nine states and the District of Columbia. Among the issues the unionists are fighting are Verizon’s plans to close call centers and increase outsourcing, raise health insurance costs and cut pensions.

U.S. District Court Judge Ann Donnelly issued a temporary restraining order May 10 ordering strikers to cease picketing hotels where Verizon houses strikebreakers. A series of actions by strikers employing whistles, air horns, noisemakers and a trombone, along with pressure from unionized hotel workers, have convinced a number of hotel managers to ask the scabs to leave. The petition to block the hotel actions was filed by National Labor Relations Board Regional Director James Paulsen, underlining the

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## US gov’t seeks stability for imperialist order in Mideast

Tries for Moscow deal while sending more troops



Department of Defense/Dominique A. Pineiro

Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joe Dunford, center left, speaks with Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland April 21 during visit to Iraq to discuss U.S. campaign against Islamic State.

BY MAGGIE TROWE

As he approaches the end of his second and final term, Barack Obama — who ran for president in 2008 pledging to phase out U.S. military involvement in the Mideast — has continuously carried out U.S. imperialist interventions abroad and is now increasing Washington’s combat role.

Obama drew down Washington’s troop deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan from 200,000 when he succeeded George W. Bush to nearly

5,000 in Iraq and 9,800 in Afghanistan today. But his administration is increasing the U.S. combat presence in those countries, as well as in Syria, and has authorized airstrikes and covert operations in Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen.

Washington just inaugurated its first European ground-based anti-missile system in Romania. And the Obama administration has stepped up naval operations in the South China

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## Indiana aerospace workers reject cuts, fight lockout at Honeywell



Militant/Betsy Farley

Locked-out members of UAW Local 9 picket Honeywell in South Bend, Indiana, May 15.

BY BETSY FARLEY

SOUTH BEND, Indiana — Production workers at the Honeywell International plant here are picketing around the clock after the company locked out 317 members of United Auto Workers Local 9 on May 9. The local voted 270 to 30 to reject Honeywell’s “Las best, and final of-

fer,” which drastically increases health care costs, tears up work schedules and allows the company to ignore job classifications.

The plant makes airplane brakes and wheels for Boeing, Airbus and other aerospace giants. Honeywell also locked out 41 Auto Workers at its

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## Washington launches anti-missile system on Russian ‘periphery’

BY SETH GALINSKY

Washington inaugurated its first ground-based anti-missile system in Europe May 11 in Romania, and broke ground on a second site in Poland the next day. Russian President Vladimir Putin scoffed at U.S. claims the program is defensive and aimed at Iran, not Russia.

“They aren’t defensive systems,

they are part of the U.S. strategic nuclear potential deployed on the periphery, in Eastern Europe,” Putin said May 13. “We will have to think about how we can fend off the threats to the Russian Federation’s security.”

The anti-missile site, which will be run by NATO, is housed at a U.S. naval facility located at a Romanian

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## Prisoners strike to protest abuse and little or no pay in Alabama

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — A work stoppage by hundreds of inmates in several Alabama prisons brought national attention to the conditions faced by the 29,000 men and women incarcerated in the state’s penal system, especially the use of unpaid or poorly paid labor. The strike, which began on May

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Quebec senior care workers hold day-long strike for \$15 an hour

Australia truck drivers discuss fight for safety, unions



# US anti-missile system

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military base in Deveselu. U.S. Navy Lt. Shawn Eklund told CNN the new facility is capable of firing SM-3 missiles that can intercept “short and medium range enemy missiles.”

The Polish site is scheduled to be up and running in 2018.

The anti-missile system, officially called the European Phased Adaptive Approach, was initiated by President George W. Bush and so far also includes a radar system in Turkey, a command and control center in Germany and four naval destroyers with Aegis ballistic missiles that operate in the Mediterranean Sea from a base in Spain.

Tensions between the U.S. and Russian governments have been increasing over the last several years, alongside collaboration between the two in trying to stabilize the situation in Syria and President Barack Obama’s talk of a “reset” in their relations.

Putin boycotted the fourth and final high-level Nuclear Security Summit that Obama hosted in Washington, D.C., March 31 to April 1. The summits ostensibly advance Obama’s goal of “a world without nuclear weapons.” In fact, they have been cover for Washington and Moscow to continue to possess more than 90 percent of the world’s nuclear arsenal, while trying to prevent more nations from acquiring them.

In 2011 Obama signed the New Start treaty with Moscow, which allowed the Russian government to scrap many of its older silo-based nuclear missiles with upgraded mobile ones. According to *Time* magazine, Russian delegates told U.S. representatives during an informal discussion that “of course you guys want a nuclear-free world, because then you

would dominate the world with your conventional weapons. Why would we ever want to do that?”

Despite portraying himself as an opponent of nuclear weapons, Obama has been stepping up the modernization of the U.S. arsenal. The Pentagon is planning five new types of nuclear warheads that are part of an atomic revitalization over the next three decades. Last year the U.S. military flight-tested the B61 Model 12 in Nevada. Moscow called the tests “openly provocative.”

According to *Popular Mechanics* the B61 has an internal guidance system and a “dial-a-yield,” meaning that the explosive power of each warhead can be set by the ground crew. The yield could range from 2 percent of the explosive power of the bomb Washington dropped on Hiroshima during World War II up to *three times* the power of that blast.

The escalation of development of nuclear weapons, whether “tactical” or otherwise, and Washington’s provocative anti-missiles shield and other moves increase the risk of a world-threatening conflagration.

In April the Pentagon reported that there have been repeated incidents of Russian aircraft buzzing U.S. planes and ships in the Baltic Sea, Black Sea and other areas around the former Soviet Union.

After one incident in April, Secretary of State John Kerry said “under the rules of engagement, that could have been a shoot-down.”

In another move aimed at Moscow, next month in Poland some 25,000 troops from U.S. Army Europe, Polish forces and other NATO nations will hold Anakonda 16, one of the largest war exercises in Europe in years.



Above, Missile Defense Agency/US Navy  
**Above, July 30, 2009, Aegis missile test launch from the USS Hopper. With activation of land-based site in Romania, Obama administration is driving ahead with anti-missile system viewed by Moscow as a provocation. Right, sketch of new U.S. nuclear weapon, with dial for four levels of explosive power, up to three times the strength of bomb that leveled Hiroshima.**

## Honeywell workers fight lockout

**Continued from front page**  
Green Island, New York, brake pad plant.

“We couldn’t accept going from \$68 a week to \$114 a week for family medical and a deductible increase from \$3,400 to \$8,000,” said Local 9 President Adam Stevenson.

“We’ve always had set work schedules, start times of 7:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.,” said Ivan Donaldson, an electrician with 19 years in the plant. “Honeywell wants to eliminate that so you start whenever they want and work as long as they want, just like what they do to workers at Walmart.” Forced overtime would also increase.

Honeywell brought in at least 200 people from Strom Engineering, a strikebreaking outfit, two months before the lockout began. “They were on the floor trying to learn our jobs even before we took a strike vote,” Stevenson said. “But that also helped people who were wavering to see what the company was up to. It brought us together.”

Honeywell boasted a 6.3 percent profit increase for the first quarter of

2016, a net income increase of \$1.19 billion, and a 3 percent sales increase in its aerospace division, its biggest by revenue. In a statement it said that the concessions it is demanding are “consistent with the economic realities facing the industry,” pointing to “thousands of job cuts announced by our largest customer in March.”

“They treat us like we’re a commodity, like corn or soybeans,” said John Billington, a substation electrician.

“The unions are in trouble,” said William Bolen, a CNC machinist with eight years seniority. “If we don’t stop it here it will spread. And the government is on the same side as corporate America. That’s who runs the government — why else don’t we have at least a \$15 minimum wage?”

Honeywell’s lock-out tactic is nothing new. In 2010 and 2014 the company locked out workers at its uranium conversion plant in Metropolis, Illinois, after members of United Steelworkers Local 7-669 refused to accept major concessions. Both times workers beat back some of the company’s demands.

## The Militant

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

# THE MILITANT

**Workers fight for moral high ground!**

*The ‘Militant’ highlights the need for workers to throw off the self-image the rulers teach us. It covers struggles like successful 27-year fight in UK to hold cops responsible and end their slanders of victims in the deaths of 96 soccer fans in 1989 Hillsborough stadium disaster.*

Militant/Dag Tirsén  
Rally in Liverpool, England, April 27 after Hillsborough inquest held cops responsible.

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Join SWP campaigning

Continued from front page  
call NILF — people Not In the Labor Force, workers 16 or older who are not employed or actively looking for work — increased by over half a million last month to bring the total to 94 million, the highest number ever recorded.

It’s in this context that members and supporters of the SWP are taking their revolutionary working-class perspective to workers at their doorsteps and in struggles against the bosses’ attacks — from East Coast Verizon strikers to locked-out aerospace workers in Indiana to warehouse workers fighting firings in Los Angeles — and as they put the party’s presidential ticket of Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart on the ballot.

The SWP is also running candidates for Senate and Congress in California, Minnesota, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York, Georgia, Florida and the District of Columbia.

Communists find many people who want to join in discussing how the working class can unite and build a powerful movement to organize unions, fight police brutality, defend women’s rights and transform ourselves to become capable of displacing the dictatorship of capital and building a new society based on human solidarity.

SWP campaigners have put Kennedy and Hart on the ballot in Colorado, and are prepared to file in Louisiana in July. Ballot drives to get the party out to workers in small towns and big cities are underway in Washington and New Jersey, and begin in Tennessee and Minnesota May 20.

Betsy Farley, a union steelworker and Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in Chicago, joined

pickets May 15 in South Bend, Indiana, where aerospace workers, members of United Auto Workers Local 9, have been locked out by Honeywell because they refused to sign a concessions contract. “They treat us like we’re a commodity, like corn or soybeans,” electrician John Billington told Farley. Four locked-out workers subscribed to the *Militant*.

SWP branches are organizing meetings with workers and young people interested in going to the June 16-18 SWP Active Workers Conference in Oberlin, Ohio (see article this page).

“I’m looking forward to going to the SWP conference because I enjoyed the party forums I went to in Omaha,” Chris Steffen, who works in a plastic fabrication plant in Lincoln, Nebraska, told the *Militant* May 18. “As some of us were organizing a demonstration in defense of a woman’s right to choose abortion at the state capitol here in April, we had a forum where Alexandria Smith, one of the organizers of the protest, and I spoke, and a dozen people took part in the discussion.”

Steffen and SWP member Joe Swanson went to a May Day meeting on the fight to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. “We raised the need to organize unions as part of winning \$15,” he said.

Workers fund the ‘Militant’

At a May 14-16 meeting to prepare the conference, the SWP National Committee decided to extend the deadline for the party’s drive to win readers and contributors to the *Militant* to May 24 to help branches of the SWP and Communist League sister parties around the world go over the top.

To date 1,435 subscriptions and \$90,588 have come in toward the quota of 1,550 subscriptions and \$110,000 for the *Militant* Fighting Fund. The cost of the paper’s production is sustained by



Militant/Janet Post  
John Staggs, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, right, joins Moorestown, New Jersey, picket line of outdoor line technicians, members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 827, on strike against Verizon April 27.

hundreds of contributions every spring.

“Twelve readers of the *Militant* here contributed \$621 to the *Militant* Fighting Fund,” Nat London writes from Paris. “Five workers on the SNCM ferry boat line in Marseille and a group of ‘temporary’ workers joined workers at the Peugeot auto plant in Poissy near here to put us over our goal of \$450.” The workers read French translations of *Militant* articles sent out each week by supporters in Paris.

Twenty-one prisoners have subscribed during the drive. “I feel privi-

leged that the *Militant* has opened my eyes and educated me to social issues that affect all working classes and struggles that unite us all,” a prisoner in New Zealand writes. He said he appreciates books he has gotten from Pathfinder, especially *It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System: The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*.

To join with the Socialist Workers Party in winning workers to a revolutionary perspective, contact a party branch listed in the directory on page 8.

Spring subscription drive			
April 2 - May 24 (week 6)			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Lincoln*	17	20	118%
Seattle	100	110	110%
Atlanta	100	104	104%
Oakland	110	111	101%
Philadelphia	90	85	94%
Miami	50	47	94%
Chicago	125	114	91%
New York	220	187	85%
Twin Cities	80	64	80%
Los Angeles	200	141	71%
Washington	115	76	66%
Total U.S.	1207	1059	88%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Manchester	60	67	112%
London	75	77	103%
Total U.K.	135	144	107%
CANADA			
Montreal	55	57	104%
Calgary	45	45	100%
Total Canada	100	102	102%
AUSTRALIA	60	55	92%
NEW ZEALAND	50	54	108%
PRISONERS	15	21	140%
Total	1567	1435	93%
Should be	1550	1329	86%
*Raised goal			

Militant Fighting Fund			
April 2- May 24 (week 6)			
Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Lincoln*	\$240	\$321	134%
Twin Cities	\$3,500	\$3,835	110%
Philadelphia	\$3,200	\$3,235	101%
Seattle	\$7,500	\$6,980	93%
Washington	\$7,700	\$6,589	86%
Atlanta	\$10,000	\$8,420	84%
Oakland	\$14,500	\$10,775	74%
Chicago	\$11,500	\$8,451	73%
New York	\$21,000	\$15,405	73%
Miami	\$3,000	\$2,090	70%
Los Angeles	\$8,600	\$5,105	59%
U.S. Total	\$90,740	\$71,206	78%
CANADA			
Montreal	\$4,000	\$5,000	125%
Calgary	\$3,200	\$3,109	97%
Canada Total	\$7,200	\$8,109	113%
NEW ZEALAND	\$4,000	\$4,556	114%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	\$2,000	\$2,690	135%
Manchester	\$700	\$931	133%
U.K. Total	\$2,700	\$3,621	134%
AUSTRALIA	\$1,100	\$1,275	116%
FRANCE	\$450	\$621	138%
Other	\$1,200	\$1,200	
Total	\$107,390	\$90,588	82%
Should be	\$110,000	\$94,286	86%
*Raised goal			

### Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign!

Meet the candidates

**Alyson Kennedy for president**  
May 20-24 Twin Cities  
May 26-30 Montreal  
June 4-5 Seattle  
June 7-8 Miami  
June 10-11 Atlanta

**Osborne Hart for vice president**  
May 20-24 Seattle  
May 26-27 New York  
May 29-June 2 Tenn.  
June 4-5 Philadelphia  
June 7-11 Minneapolis

**The campaign needs funds — contribute now!**

Contact an SWP branch near you (see list on page 8) to get involved in the campaign. Send a check to Socialist Workers Party National Campaign  
227 W. 29th St., 6th Fl., New York NY 10001.  
Tel.: (646) 922-8186. Email: swp2016campaign@gmail.com

## Socialist Workers Party conference to discuss capitalist crisis, what to do

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The three-day Active Workers Conference sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party June 16-18 in Oberlin, Ohio, will bring workers and young people active in political struggles together to learn from talks, classes and informal discussion and debate.

Several hundred participants are expected from across the U.S. and around the world. The gathering is held on the Oberlin College campus.

Talks by Socialist Workers Party leaders Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters, as well as classes and displays, will address the economic, political and moral crisis of the capitalist rulers that the 2016 election campaign reflects, the growing receptivity among workers to a revolutionary perspective and openings to build the revolutionary party.

Six classes will be presented.

Martin Koppel and Alyson Kennedy will present a class on “Puerto Rico Is

a U.S. Colony: the SWP’s Communist Continuity in the Fight for Independence.”

“The Coming Apart of Imperialism’s Post-‘U.S. Lost the Cold War’ Order in the Middle East,” will be given by John Studer and Colleen Torberg.

Norton Sandler and Omari Musa will give a class on “Colonization, ‘Trade Union-ification,’ and the Struggle for a Proletarian Party.”

“No Nukes!’ — Our Call for U.S. Nuclear Disarmament and Why Nuclear Weapons Weaken Proletarian Power” is the title of a class by Dave Prince and Naomi Craine.

“The World Capitalist Economic Crisis: Why the Revolutionary Conquest of Power Is Necessary” will be given by Steve Clark and Mark Thomas.

Gerald Smith and Emma Johnson will present a class titled, “Capitalist Nation States and Fracturing of the European Union: Damned If They Do, Damned If

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# Gary Tyler, framed up in 1974, walks free from Louisiana prison

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

Gary Tyler, 57, walked free April 29 after almost 42 years locked up in Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. He had spent his first nine years in solitary confinement, initially on death row.

At age 16, Tyler was framed up on charges of killing a Caucasian youth during a racist attack on a busload of Black high school students who were part of a desegregation program in Destrehan, Louisiana.

As the bus carrying Tyler and other Black students attempted to leave school on Oct. 7, 1974, it was surrounded by a brick-and-bottle throwing mob. A shot rang out. Timothy Weber, 13, standing across the schoolyard with his mother, was fatally shot.

The police searched the students and the bus for more than three hours. When Tyler protested the cop harassment, he was arrested for “disturbing the peace.” When he refused to confess to killing Weber, he was beaten by the cops.

The police coerced testimony against Tyler from fellow students, who later recanted. Police eventually located a gun in Tyler’s seat, despite having found nothing during the first

search. The gun had been stolen from a police firing range used by the very cops who arrested Tyler and were investigating the case. No fingerprints were found on it, nor was any testing done on the bullet.

Tyler was convicted of murder by an all-white jury in 1975 and sentenced to death. At 17, he was the youngest person on death row in the United States. Over decades, Tyler unequivocally maintained his innocence. His mother, Juanita Tyler, helped lead campaigns for his freedom that won support around the world, up to her death in 2012.

“There’s a lot of space in between when Gary Tyler went to prison and his release. What didn’t change was his ability to see an injustice,” Norris Henderson, executive director of Voice for the Ex-Offender in New Orleans, told the *Militant* in a phone interview May 16. Henderson is also founder of a program to help former inmates once they leave prison.

“Gary was exposed to the Angola Three,” Henderson said, referring to Herman Wallace, Albert Woodfox and Robert King, who were held in

solitary confinement in Angola prison for decades after organizing prisoners to fight against dehumanizing conditions. The last of the three, Woodfox, was finally released in February.

“Death row and solitary were on the same tier of the prison,” Henderson said. The Angola Three “looked out for Gary, helped him navigate his situation. They helped him to become the individual he is today — just as they have educated all of us.”

“We thank the people whose work has helped us to be able to witness this,” he added.

## No pardon, no new trial

In 1976, Tyler’s sentence was commuted to life in prison. Under Louisiana law, a pardon is required in order to get paroled from a life sentence. Three times the parole board recommended his release, but the governor refused. In 1990 Gov. Charles Roemer cited Tyler’s failure to complete his high school equivalency test as a reason, but Tyler had repeatedly requested entrance into Angola’s educational programs and was told they were full. The same year, the state attorney general argued against a pardon on grounds that Tyler had “demanded he be allowed to correspond with socialist and communist publications such as *Socialist Worker*.”

Tyler never got a new trial. In 1980, the U.S. Court of Appeals vacated his conviction and ordered a retrial on the grounds that the judge’s instruction to the jury to find that Tyler had “intended the natural and probable consequences



Joan Griswold/Handout via Reuters

Gary Tyler, framed up at age 16 for the death of a Caucasian student during a desegregation fight, shown here before his release from prison in Angola, Louisiana.

of his act,” made the trial unfair. When the state appealed, the same court reversed its order for a new trial, but maintained that the judge’s instructions were unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case on appeal.

In 2012, the Supreme Court struck down mandatory life terms without parole for juveniles. The decision said that they should have the right to argue for parole or to be resentenced. Authorities in Louisiana, Michigan and Pennsylvania said the ruling was not retroactive, and refused to apply it to Tyler and 1,100 other workers behind bars. In January this year the Supreme Court ruled that the decision was retroactive.

This led to an April 29 resentencing hearing where Tyler accepted a plea bargain of 21 years for manslaughter, having already served twice that time, walking out of court free at last.

## Socialist Workers Party conference

Continued from page 3

They Don’t.”

*Are They Rich Because They’re Smart? Class, Privilege, and Education Under Capitalism*, a new Pathfinder book by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, will be for sale at the conference, and participants can browse tables loaded with hundreds of Pathfinder titles and buy them at special prices.

Near the book tables there will be displays using photos, maps and text to expand on themes of classes and talks.

There will be plenty of time for informal discussion, recreation and relaxation between talks and classes, during buffet-style meals at the college cafeteria and at evening socials.

Conference summaries on Saturday will draw together the three days of discussions. A panel that evening will feature remarks from party candidates and participants involved in party-building activities worldwide and will project activities to win workers and youth to communism, including sending out

teams to campaign for the SWP straight from the conference. It will be followed by a party and dance.

SWP supporters, who volunteer to help produce Pathfinder books and raise monthly financial contributions for the SWP, will meet with party leaders June 19 to discuss their work.

It’s not too late to register and organize to drive or fly to the conference with others. To learn more, contact SWP members near you (see list on page 8).

## Prisoners strike to protest abuse, little or no pay

Continued from front page

Day, also underscored how prisoners are organizing themselves to fight for dignity and against systematic abuse.

“Conditions continue to get worse here,” Melvin Ray, 45, told the *Militant* May 15 in a phone interview from one of Alabama’s state prisons. In addition to overcrowding and the unpaid labor prisoners are forced to perform, “the courts are not impartial, prisoners are brutalized, there’s a lack of funds for education and other programs, and the food is often not fit for human consumption,” said Ray, a founder of the Free Alabama Movement, which initiated the protest. Prisoners formed the group in January 2014, when they organized their first strike.

Beginning May 1 prisoners at Holman, Staton and Elmore Correctional Facilities refused to leave their cells to work, from unpaid jobs serving food to “industry” jobs that pay from \$.17 to \$.30 an hour — the only paid jobs in the state’s prisons. Prisoners at St. Clair joined the action May 9.

At Holman, industry jobs include making Alabama state license plates and bedding for the prisons in the sewing factory. Elmore has a canning and recycling plant and St. Clair has a vehicle restoration and chemical plant.

The Alabama government legalized

the use of prison labor by private, for-profit companies in 2012. “We are going to put our prisoners to work. They are going to be paid a reasonable wage,” said state representative Jim McClen-don, the bill’s sponsor, at the time. Since then, 17 different prison labor industries have been set up across the state.

Prisoners also routinely face fines and fees. “Our mass incarceration is a form of slavery, because we’re not being paid for our work, but we’re being charged outrageous fines,” one prisoner told Solitary Watch, a website that publishes information about solitary confinement and its impact. Prisoners are charged \$4 for armbands and identification cards, \$31.50 for a urinalysis test and \$200 to petition a court, the only way a prisoner can file a complaint.

Prisoners also are charged \$25 for being caught with a cell phone the first time, with fines rising \$25 for each further violation. Prison guards sell the phones to prisoners, who use them primarily to call their families, according to Solitary Watch. Its report also cited prisoners’ complaints about the water, which “looks like fog. You cannot drink it,” one said.

The prisons where the strike occurred were put on lockdown after it started. Authorities also retaliated by cutting the size of meals, a practice inmates call

“bird-feeding.” “For the last 10 days we have been receiving well below a thousand calories per meal,” prisoner Kinetik Justice, who is in solitary confinement in Holman Correctional Facility, told the radio program “Democracy Now.”

Alabama spends only \$26 a day per prisoner. The national average is \$62, according to the Equal Justice Initiative. “It spends the least of any state on medical care for inmates,” states an EJI fact sheet. “Unsafe prison conditions have given rise to lawsuits in which courts have found that crowding in state and local facilities is ‘barbaric.’”

“We have contact with women in Tutwiler women’s prison,” Ray said. “They are subject to very harsh conditions. Many are supporting our protests, even though they didn’t participate directly.”

“We have support from family members and some other groups in the community,” Ray added. On May 7, a protest to support the strikers was held outside Holman Correctional Facility in Atmore, sponsored by the Free Alabama Movement and The Ordinary People Society, which backs the prisoners’ fight. The support group Mothers and Families is planning a June 22 protest at Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham to back the prisoners’ ongoing struggle.

The prisoners ended their strike May 13.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CANADA

#### Montreal

**US Elections: The Working Class Alternative to the Brutality of Capitalism.** Speaker: Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president. Sat., May 28, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

**Agricultural Workers and Working Farmers Bear the Brunt of Collapsing Dairy Prices.** Speakers: Gina Greenwood, Farmers United # Pro Dairy; Annalucia Vermont, Communist League. Fri., May 27, 7:00 p.m. Donation: \$5 188a Onehunga Mall, Onehunga Tel.: (09) 636-3231.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

## Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including striking Verizon workers, Steelworkers opposing concessions, construction workers demanding safe conditions and workers fighting for \$15 and a union. I invite those involved in workers' battles to contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

— Maggie Trowe

### Quebec seniors' care workers hold day-long strike for \$15 an hour

MONTREAL — In their first strike ever, some 3,000 nurses, nurses' aides and other care workers walked out for a day May 11 at 42 private seniors' residences throughout Quebec in their fight for a 15 Canadian dollars an hour minimum wage (CA\$1 = US\$0.78). The contract of the members of Service Employees International Union Local 298 expired in February.

"This is a historic strike," nurses' aide Emmanuel Saladin told the *Militant* at a press conference across from L'Image d'Outremont residence here. Saladin is president of the union committee at the residence. "The nurses' aides start at CA\$11.80 an hour and the average wage

is CA\$12.50. It is not enough."

"We do the same hard work as seniors' care workers in the public sector, but get paid less," said Immeagyde Rejouis, a worker and vice president of the union committee. "We love our work, but it needs to be valued. The residents support what we are doing."

L'Image d'Outremont is owned by Le Groupe Maurice, which owns 20 residences in the province.

While the big companies are refusing to meet the union's demands, some small independent residences have reached agreements, including one with an immediate raise to CA\$15 an hour and further increases to CA\$16.87, a union press release said.

"We have a big job ahead of us," Lo-



Militant/John Steele

**Members of Service Employees International Union Local 298 picket during one-day strike by seniors' residence workers across Quebec demanding CA\$15 an hour minimum wage.**

cal 298 President Richard Belhumeur said. "About 225 residences are organized out of 1,700 in the province."

— John Steele

### Thousands of Greek workers, farmers protest attack on pensions

ATHENS, Greece — Several thousand workers, students and others

marched to the parliament here May 8, part of three days of strikes and street protests May 6-8 called by the country's three main union federations.

Hundreds of farmers joined the May 7 action in Athens. Public transport workers, civil servants, sailors, rail workers and others struck for the three days.

The protests were called in response to proposed legislation to cut 5.4 billion euros (\$6.2 billion) from social security pensions and hike taxes. The Greek parliament approved the bill May 8, hoping to meet demands by creditors before they will release more loans as part of the 86 billion euro "bailout" the Syriza Party government agreed to last year.

This is the latest round of attacks on working people over the last six years of economic depression. Household income has plunged by one-third and official unemployment stands at nearly 25 percent. Greece's national debt is 180 percent of gross domestic product.

"These measures are aimed at the working class, to take back social benefits that working people have," public school teacher Aggeliki Katsamani, 34, said at the May 8 rally. "I came here today because if there are no protests there will be many more such measures."

— Georges Mehrabian

## Australia truck drivers discuss fight for safety, unions

BY LINDA HARRIS  
AND MANUELE LASALO

SYDNEY — Recent counterposed actions by unionized fleet truck drivers and independent owner-drivers highlight the way the capitalist rulers try to pit working people against each other. They pose the challenge to the labor movement to win owner-drivers to the union and to rely on our own power and mobilization — not regulation by the bosses' government — to unite and fight for better conditions.

Some 200 members of the Transport

ten don't have a full load on the return trip. The tribunal order forced them to charge full rates both ways, leaving some stranded while awaiting full loads.

Dave West, a Transport Workers driver who took part in the union protest, told the *Militant* he thinks truck drivers need the tribunal to regulate safety, but acknowledged its ruling had hit some owner-drivers hard. "The way forward," West said, is for workers "in all different parts of the industry to come together."

That gets at the heart of the challenge. Big freight companies and supermarket chains dictate conditions for thousands of drivers, cutting corners on maintenance and pressing them to cut delivery times. They use competition among workers and the attitude of many union officials — who view independent owner-drivers as the problem, not as fellow workers — to divide truckers and drive down conditions for all workers.

There are different economic lay-

ers among owner-drivers. Many are workers who own or are paying off one truck. Others have expanded to manage a small fleet. Capitalists foster illusions that the dream of "becoming your own boss" is open to everyone, so as to trick owner-drivers into identifying with management rather than fellow drivers.

An example of how class-conscious workers drew drivers owning their own trucks into an alliance with fleet drivers was set in the 1930s by the leadership of the Minnesota Teamsters. In *Teamster Politics*, Farrell Dobbs, one of the union leaders, describes how they were convinced that "those owning one truck, who did their own driving, should be approached by the union as fellow workers." So they set out to organize as many of them as possible. Then "the union as a whole followed through by backing them in [their] struggles." Dobbs concludes that this course "checked the divisive schemes of the bosses."

## COMMENTARY

Workers Union blocked traffic here April 28, calling for the reinstatement of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal.

The Liberal-National coalition government of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull abolished the tribunal April 18, the day after hundreds of owner-drivers from across the country demonstrated outside federal parliament in Canberra. They were protesting a tribunal order mandating minimum rates to be charged by some 35,000 owner-drivers, which took effect April 7.

The tribunal was set up in 2012 by the Labor government with the backing of union officials, to "regulate on safety" in the trucking industry. Transport Workers national secretary Tony Sheldon had argued that the higher rates would improve safety by addressing "pressure drivers are under to speed, drive long hours, skip mandatory rest breaks and skip maintenance on their vehicles."

Owner-drivers at the Canberra protest saw the mandate not as a measure to advance safety, but as something that would price them out of business. "Safety is paramount for us," Alina Hawkins told the *Militant*. She has driven cattle trucks in rural New South Wales for 10 years.

Many said they are already over-regulated. Some drivers, especially those who carry bulk loads from farms, of-

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 31, 1991

ST. LOUIS — In the last year, officials of the United Auto Workers union have been crying crocodile tears over the conditions of workers in the auto industry in Mexico. Their tears are becoming a flood as the U.S. government moves toward an agreement with Mexico that would break down many trade barriers between the two countries.

According to mouthpieces of the capitalists of both countries, the agreement would spur the Mexican economy, which is in deep crisis. Economic growth has declined; the minimum wage has dropped 50%; and unemployment has skyrocketed. One of the main culprits of the economic disaster is Mexico's debt to the imperialist banks and governments. It rose to \$107 billion in 1989.



May 30, 1966

An unidentified U.S. government "reliable source" admitted May 24 that a Cuban soldier had been killed at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay. However, he asserted the soldier had been inside the base.

Cuba charged the soldier, a sentry at the perimeter of the base, had been killed by gunfire from the base. At first there was a flat U.S. denial that any incident had occurred. Then there was a statement that an investigation was underway. The unnamed Washington source said the incident is still being investigated.

Following the shooting, angry citizens of Santiago and other Cuban cities organized demonstrations demanding the U.S. get out of Guantánamo.



May 31, 1941

San Francisco, May 26 — Striking AFL and CIO Bay Area shipyard machinists are still standing firmly on their feet despite the foul blows thrown at them by the phoniest collection of pie-cards, government strikebreakers and chairwarming admirals ever joined together to break a strike.

Every conceivable effort, from pleading and browbeating to open scab-herding and picket-line crashing has been used in the past week.

Nation's No. 1 Fink, John Frey, backed by a small army of cops, marched a few score workers through the picket line. Most of them marched right out again. The first American convoys in the war were used not against Hitler and the Nazis but against striking shipyard workers.



# Relatives of victims of US cop brutality visit Cuba

## Exchange experiences with leaders of Federation of Cuban Women in Havana

A delegation of relatives of victims of police killings and others involved in fights against cop brutality in the United States visited Cuba to share their experiences and learn about the Cuban Revolution. Their week-long visit was hosted by the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) and the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). The article below is from the May 5 on-line edition of *Mujeres*, the FMC's publication. Translation is by the Militant.

BY MARIELA PÉREZ VALENZUELA

On Tuesday [May 3], mothers and other relatives of victims of police brutality in the United States visited the national headquarters of the Federation of Cuban Women. There they shared their experiences with Teresa Amarelle Boué, general secretary of this nongovernmental organization, and others who explained the social and political perspectives that guide the organization, which has four million members over the age of 14.

At the meeting, which lasted a little more than two hours, the visitors spoke about the abuses suffered by their sons and brothers who had been killed by police forces, and in many cases, justice was never served. They also discussed the situation of the working class in the world's leading economy.

Juanita Young told how in March 2000 her son Malcolm Ferguson was killed by Louis Rivera, a New York policeman. Malcolm, a 23-year-old Black man, was shot in the head at point blank range a week after participating in a protest against the acquittal of four police officers, who killed an immigrant from Guinea.

Young, a founder of Mothers Cry for Justice, told how the authorities offered her money to forget what happened to her son, an offer she rejected immediately. She added that even though a jury ruled in 2007 in favor of the lawsuit she filed against the city for wrongful death, and held Rivera responsible for the killing of her son, the officer (who admitted his guilt) has not served a sentence.

It has been 22 years since a New York



Militant/Róger Calero

Clockwise from left: Arnetta Grable, Iris Baez, Alyson Kennedy and Juanita Young, part of U.S. delegation; Yanira Kuper, Arelys Santana and Teresa Amarelle Boué from the Federation of Cuban Women; a translator; and Andree Smith, from U.S. at federation's offices in Havana May 3.

policeman killed Anthony Baez, who was playing football in the street with three of his brothers and friends.

His mother, Iris Baez, said that the ball hit a police car and that when the officer arrested one of his brothers and Anthony protested, they killed him.

Iris Baez, mother of 12 children, six of them adopted, recalled the big protests when Officer Francis Livoti was acquitted by the State of New York in 1996.

Her face marked by continuing sorrow for her murdered son, she said that two years later Livoti was convicted on federal charges of violating Anthony Baez's civil rights, but not for his murder. Livoti went to prison for seven and a half years.

In 1998, Baez created the Anthony Baez Community and Parents Against Police Brutality Foundation, which provides support and solidarity to families affected by police violence in the United States.

Among the other visitors are Arnetta Grable and her son Aaron. They traveled to Cuba together. Aaron is the brother of Lamar Wayne Grable, killed by Detroit Police Officer Eugene Brown in 1996 while returning home from a party.

Arnetta said that the police officer said he thought Lamar was a suspect who had escaped. She recalled how

the mayor of Detroit offered her a million dollars if she would stop protesting this vile crime, which she refused. This gave her more strength to continue fighting.

A judge even claimed she had mental problems and was unfit to care for her children, she said, which was totally false.

Grable, who along with her family, has been harassed by the Detroit police department, noted that Brown has never gone to prison, even though a judge found him guilty in 2003 in a lawsuit she filed. Brown was later fired from the police force after having shot nine people.

Amarelle Boué, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba, told the U.S. delegation in another moment of fraternal exchange with the national leadership of the FMC that defense of the Cuban Revolution and efforts to achieve full gender equality are priorities of the organization.

That's why, she said, Cubans found it difficult to listen respectfully when U.S. president Barack Obama said during his recent official visit to Havana on our own soil that the people of this island should forget history.

Amarelle Boué said that the revolution's demand for equality is one of the

reasons why it is impossible to set history aside. Before the victory of the revolution in January 1959, she said, women were the lowest paid and most discriminated against.

The delegation from the north listened with astonishment to the FMC leader as she explained how the situation had gradually changed. Today women in Cuba make up 66.6 percent of the technical and professional workforce, 60.2 percent of physicians, and more than 80 percent of nurses, alongside other gains achieved by women.

### Problems in the capitalist system

Alyson Kennedy, a union militant for more than four decades, speaking separately with *Mujeres*, said the problems workers face in the United States are the result of the capitalist system. She said that this made the fight to confront the high cost of living a priority.

Kennedy said that millions of workers face increasing difficulties, with no immediate solution.

A member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, Kennedy is right in the middle of the long battle by employees of restaurants and stores to win a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, a small amount compared with the cost of living today in the strongest capitalist power on the planet.

It's impossible to survive if you earn less than \$15 an hour, because you can't afford the high rents; people in this situation have to apply for subsidies through food stamps; and some women put off having children because of the huge cost of childcare. In face of this picture, she emphasized, the government, far from helping, has cut social welfare payments.

During their stay in Cuba the U.S. delegation will visit sites of historical and cultural interest.

On Tuesday they visited the Orlando Pantoja Elementary School in the Plaza of the Revolution district, where they met with school officials and students and learned about the work being carried out in an Educational Center for Women and the Family.

According to the delegation's itinerary, a meeting is planned with the five antiterrorist fighters [the Cuban Five], who served long prison terms in the capitalist nation. On May Day they joined the historic march marking International Workers Day in the Plaza of the Revolution.

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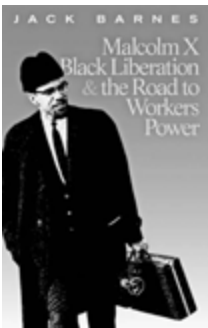


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# Washington uses crisis to push for pro-US gov't in Venezuela

BY SETH GALINSKY

Growing shortages of basic goods and medicines, a drop in factory production, out-of-control inflation and severe electrical shortages are fueling a deepening social and political crisis in Venezuela. Meanwhile Washington is tightening the screws, hoping to get a government there more to the liking of U.S. imperialism.

In March President Barack Obama renewed an executive order declaring the government of President Nicolás Maduro “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.” On April 28 the U.S. Senate approved a three-year extension of sanctions against Venezuelan officials alleged to have violated “human rights.”

These measures “go against the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and the sovereign equality of states,” the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) declared May 5. The alliance, initiated by the governments of Cuba and Venezuela, includes 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

“The Socialist Workers Party stands in solidarity with the working people of Venezuela,” SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy told the *Militant* May 18. “We demand Washington end its sanctions and oppose any interference against Venezuelan sovereignty.”

The pro-imperialist opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable — which won the majority of seats in Venezuela’s legislature in January — turned in more than a million signatures May 2 in favor of a recall of Maduro to the National Electoral Board. The board has not yet ruled on their validity, and Vice President Aristóbulo Istúriz said there won’t be a recall vote, accusing the opposition of “fraud.”

Maduro extended a “state of exception and economic emergency” May 13, charging that opposition groups were promoting hoarding, boycott, usury, shortages and inflation to destabilize the government. He said the armed forces would be deployed to guarantee distribution of food and other necessities. Maduro cited Obama’s executive order as an example of imperialist intervention aiding the opposition.

Henrique Capriles, who lost the last presidential election, on May 17 called on the armed forces “to decide whether you are with the constitution or with Maduro.”

Since 1998, when Hugo Chávez was elected president, the government has said that it was implementing a Bolivarian Revolution and 21st century socialism. The U.S. government — which was never happy about close ties between Chávez and the revolutionary government of Cuba nor Chávez’s refusal to bow to U.S. demands — backed more than one attempt to overthrow Chávez, including a 2002 coup that was reversed after thousands of working people took to the streets.

But instead of mobilizing working people to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class and organizing workers to control conditions on the job — as Cuban revolutionaries did — Chávez put forward a course of trying to man-

age the capitalist market in favor of the working classes. Maduro has continued that course.

## Cubans aid social programs

Chávez and Maduro used the nation’s oil profits — Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world — to subsidize housing, food, health care and social programs. Many of the social programs have been carried out with the help of revolutionary Cuba, which has tens of thousands of health-care workers, teachers and other volunteers who go to some of the most impoverished and least accessible areas of the country.

The Venezuelan government in return has provided cheap oil to Cuba.

The world capitalist economic crisis has had a devastating affect on Venezuela. A precipitous drop in the price of oil — which accounts for 95 percent of the country’s export earnings — was countered by printing money. Policies aimed at managing the crisis, such as price controls and a special exchange rate for dollars for companies that import and export, fueled inflation and shortages of goods, as many capitalists found it more profitable to speculate on the exchange rates instead of manufacturing.

The country’s oil exports fell 49 percent in 2015, according to the Inter-American Development Bank. A drought made matters worse, bringing

## Cuban farmers: US gov’t aims to break our unity

As part of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuban governments, U.S. President Barack Obama has stated that the economic embargo of Cuba should end. Nonetheless, the embargo — imposed more than 55 years ago in a failed attempt to bring the Cuban people to their knees — remains in place. While its tactics are changing, U.S. imperialism’s goal remains the same: the overturning of the 1959 revolution that removed a U.S.-backed dictatorship and brought working people to power.

Among the shifts Washington is implementing is trying to use U.S. policy, money and other enticements to increase the size and weight of privately owned businesses on the island. The U.S. government aims to increase pressure from below to expand the influence of the capitalist market there; undermine social solidarity and foster a dog-eat-dog mentality; and weaken workers’ control of conditions on the job as well as economic planning that promotes decisions based on the needs of working people, not on the profit motive.

Reprinted below is a statement by the National Bureau of the National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba printed May 5 in *Granma*, the daily paper of the Communist Party of Cuba, answering Washington’s latest moves in that direction. Translation is by the *Militant*.



On April 22, the State Department announced the decision to include coffee on the list of Cuban products produced by the non-state sector that may be imported into the United States. This



Reuters/Carlos García Rawlins

**Line for toilet paper and diapers in Caracas, May 16. With skyrocketing inflation, people wait in line for basic necessities at subsidized prices, often only to leave empty-handed due to shortages. Drop in oil prices, drought have accelerated impact of capitalist economic crisis.**

the water level at the Guri hydroelectric dam, which generates 75 percent of the country’s electricity, to a record low.

Venezuela’s currency, the bolivar, has tumbled in relation to the dollar by 99.1 percent since 2012. Imports of basic foodstuffs, including sugar, flour and eggs have declined. People have to stand in line for hours hoping to buy products, often to find empty shelves. The inflation rate is estimated at 720 percent — likely the highest in the world — up from 180 percent in 2015.

Starting April 26, Maduro placed most government employees, more than 30 percent of the workforce, on a two-day workweek to conserve energy. Public hospitals are exempt. The gov-

ernment has also initiated rolling four-hour blackouts throughout the country, and pushed the clocks forward 30 minutes to increase daylight hours.

## Brewery shuts its doors

Polar, Venezuela’s largest food and beverage conglomerate, announced the closure of four plants April 29, claiming it could no longer afford to import barley, eliminating 10,000 jobs.

In response Maduro threatened to nationalize any company that does not produce. A handful of companies have been nationalized previously, carried out by the government without participation from workers. At the same time

**Continued on page 9**

is a continuation of a measure adopted by the U.S. government in February 2015 — authorizing very limited exports from Cuba — which excluded all goods and services produced by state enterprises.

It is striking that in announcing the decision, the State Department clarifies that to qualify, Cuban entrepreneurs have to prove that their business “is not owned or controlled” by the Cuban government and noted that this is another measure whose purpose is to “support the ability of the Cuban people to gain greater control over their own lives and determine their country’s future.”

What the State Department didn’t mention is the fact that Cuba was unilaterally stripped of its most-favored nation status after the blockade was decreed — a status that was our right as a founding member state [in 1948] of the International Trade Organization — and that in order to export any Cuban product to the United States, the highest customs duties had to be paid, making exports to the United States virtually impossible.

The State Department also ignores the fact that the Agrarian Reform Law, enacted after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, made more than 200,000 peasant families owners of the land, and that since then the Cuban state has implemented a program for the social, economic and productive development of the peasantry of our country and has guaranteed production assistance, access to credit, a secure market for their produce and other social benefits.

No one should think that a Cuban small farm producer can export directly to the United States. For this to be pos-

sible, Cuban foreign trade enterprises must participate and financial transactions need to be in U.S. dollars, issues that so far have not been settled.

We are conscious that the objective of these measures is to influence Cuban farmers and separate them from our state.

Cuban small farmers do not fear changes, provided they are of our own making. This is the powerful reason why the permanent aim of the government of the United States to shatter the unity of the people of Cuba can not be permitted as this would destroy a revolutionary process that has provided us with a participatory democracy, freedom, sovereignty and independence.

Cuban peasants are members of socialist civil society and we are part of the state, which represents the power of the people, and not in opposition to it. Together with the workers and all our people, we face the imperialist policy of promoting the division and disintegration of Cuban society, which is what is intended with a measure such as the recently announced one.

If the government of the United States really wants to contribute to the welfare of Cubans, what it must do is definitively lift the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed for more than 50 years, which is the main obstacle to the development of Cuba.

Cuban peasants reaffirm our loyalty to our revolutionary state against all risks and challenges. We will continue to build a prosperous and sustainable socialism, with all and for the good of all, with the patriotic commitment to continue producing for the people.



# The rich want working people to like being poor

*The Spanish-language edition of Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium is a May Book of the Month. In this excerpt, Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, responds to a question about The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray. The exchange will be included in the soon-to-be released book Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Education Under Capitalism by Jack Barnes. Copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JACK BARNES

Let me read you the first few sentences from the second to the last chapter of *The Bell Curve*, chapter 21, entitled “The Way We Are Headed.”

“In this penultimate chapter”—Herrnstein and Murray could have written “second-to-last” chapter, but they had to justify their parents having spent \$42,000, or whatever, to send them to Harvard or Yale — “In this penultimate chapter we speculate about the impact of cognitive stratification on American life and government. Predicting the course of society is chancy, but certain tendencies seem strong enough to worry about.”

“Worry about” — that’s interesting



Militant/Sara Lobman

Union protest in Charleston, West Virginia, against so-called right-to-work bill March 7, 2015. “Working people strengthen bonds of human solidarity in the process of building fighting social movements and disciplined proletarian organizations,” said Jack Barnes.

language in what is supposed to be a scientific study. Then they go on to list these “worrying” tendencies:

“■ An increasingly isolated cognitive elite.

“■ A merging of the cognitive elite with the affluent.

“■ A deteriorating quality of life for people at the bottom end of the cognitive ability distribution.”

So, that is the opening paragraph of the penultimate chapter. Now let’s say it another way:

We’re rich. We’re rich because we’re smart. You can tell we’re smart because we’re rich. Because we’re smart and rich, our kids are smart, and are going to be rich too. But there are a lot of people who aren’t getting rich, and they can’t seem to accept the fact that this is simply because their forebears were dumb. The liberals — those who are rich and those who aren’t — know this and live by it, but are embarrassed to say so. Most people, however, mistakenly think there is some connection between what we’re doing to get rich and their own deteriorating quality of life. We’re getting more isolated in that sense, and a little nervous about anyone wanting to take our privileges away. But we want to enjoy being rich. There is nothing to feel guilty about. We’re rich because we’re smart.

That is about the long and the short of it.

Then the book ends up with some proposals about what to do with all of us “at the bottom end of the cognitive ability distribution” — orphanages and so on, some of the things we have dis-

cussed already. If we can “face reality about the underclass,” the book says, then we can provide “the opportunity for everyone, not just the lucky ones, to live a satisfying life.” That is, you can learn to like being poor (or be made to pretend to like it).

But this is only possible, the book says, if we get rid of all the social programs and legislation that fly in the face of accepting this reality, such as the minimum wage; affirmative action; more money for public education (“For many people, there is nothing they can learn that will repay the cost of the teaching” — my favorite sentence in the book); the extension of Social Security protections; welfare payments; and so on. ...

According to Murray and Herrnstein, capitalism achieved a wonderful thing by the opening years of the twentieth century. In the United States it happened even a bit earlier, they say. Before then wealth and social position had for centuries been passed on from one generation to the next through a rigid class structure — through aristocratic elites. Those in the ruling classes — from the kings and queens right on down — were often not very smart, notoriously slothful, and morally dissolute.

With capitalism, however, came “the career open to talent.” Anyone, they say, from any class background or of any nationality or skin color, could now rise to positions of political power and material comfort — on the basis of merit, intelligence, hard work, and moral virtue.

But today something further is happening, as the level of capitalist technol-

ogy and computerization advances, they add. The intelligence and competence required to keep modern society up and running is inevitably concentrating wealth and power more and more in the hands of a relatively small layer of middle-class professionals, technocrats, managers, and academics — people, coincidentally, much like themselves. They call this “the cognitive elite.” There is nothing that can, or should, be done about this. That is just the way it is, and has to be, due to modern technology. ...

Human beings, of course, have a genetic structure. But we are not computers. It is not just our hardware that changes. Our software changes, too, as soon as we start doing things with our hands and eyes when we are still just tiny infants. Social practice and experience make us what we are. There are also some things about human beings, of course, that do not change, no matter what happens to us socially. We come in two different sexes. We have different skin pigmentation. And there are many other examples. The world would be awfully boring if this were not true.

But none of this is reducible to some built-in limit to the potential of human beings, or of any socially defined group of human beings. Because that is what both classes and races *are* — they are historically determined social constructs, the product of the rise of class-divided society. The concept of race, in its virulent and pseudoscientific forms, in fact, is the product of only the most recent stage in class society — the rise and consolidation of capitalism.

All the great Marxists have gloried in how the building of socialism will enable working people to transform ourselves — to transform who we are and what we are capable of. ...

It is labor that makes possible all civilization and the advance of culture. Working people begin to transform ourselves and strengthen bonds of human solidarity in the very process of building the fighting social movements and disciplined proletarian organizations without which the capitalist rulers will plunge the world into fascism and war.

The transition to socialism is not possible without the organization of working people to begin transforming ourselves and our attitudes toward life and work and each other as we fundamentally transform the social relations of production.

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May

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# Wildfire disaster a product of capitalism

*The following statement was issued May 17 by Joseph Young, chairperson of the Communist League in Calgary, Alberta.*

A massive and still-burning wild fire has destroyed a major part of Fort McMurray, Alberta, and forced the emergency evacuation of the entire population. While there are hundreds of fires in the region every year, the social catastrophe in Fort McMurray today is not caused by nature, but is a product of the profit-driven capitalist system. Some 2,400 homes and other buildings were destroyed, more than 10 percent of the total. And 8,000 more workers were ordered out of the area May 16 when the fire threatened 19 oil work camps north of the city.

In recent years Fort McMurray’s population mushroomed as bosses seeking to profit from exploitation of the oil sands brought in thousands of workers. Despite the well-known fire danger, the bosses’ government paid little attention to the safety of the city’s residents.

As the spreading fire threatened the city May 1, authorities did nothing. They waited two more days before ordering an evacuation, giving residents only minutes’ notice. The only highway out of the city rapidly became gridlocked. While the need for a second highway had been discussed for a decade, it never fit into the profit-driven priorities of the rulers.

Workers in Fort McMurray had already been hard hit by layoffs with the worldwide downturn in the oil industry. Almost 10 percent of workers in Fort McMurray were already unemployed, and home foreclosures were on the rise.

As workers flocked to the area, developers built

houses right up against the tree line or even into the forest. Fire breaks to protect the city were never built.

The financial press cheered the resulting rise of oil prices, ignoring the human toll. “Oil price rises as Canada wildfire disrupts supply,” the May 5 *Financial Times* said.

In a massive outpouring of solidarity, working people lined the 270-mile highway to Edmonton to offer gas canisters, food, water, diapers and other necessities to evacuees. In sharp contrast to the bosses’ indifference, this shows how our class is capable of organizing to defend workers’ safety and well-being.

The provincial government made a one-time payment of \$1,250 to adults and \$500 for children, an amount utterly inadequate to meet people’s needs. At the same time, the government is rushing to help the oil bosses restore production.

Many evacuees are eager to clean up and rebuild. Tens of thousands of workers with all kinds of skills are unemployed. The Communist League in Canada calls on our unions to demand the government organize and fund a massive public works program at union rates of pay to rebuild Fort McMurray.

When Santiago de Cuba, Cuba’s second largest city, was hit by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the revolutionary government organized an orderly evacuation of those at risk and volunteers were mobilized to begin rebuilding immediately. The difference between Alberta and Cuba? Cuban working people made a socialist revolution in 1959. They took political power and the self-confidence and self-worth they have conquered through their revolution gives them the capacity to run Cuba based on human needs, not profit.

## US gov’t seeks stability for imperialist order

**Continued from front page**

Sea to defend its interests against Beijing, including stationing warplanes in the Philippines under a new agreement with Manila.

In an announcement pointing to a bigger military presence in Libya, where recent U.S. airstrikes have targeted Islamic State, Pentagon officials acknowledged that Special Operations soldiers have been stationed at two outposts there since late last year. Their task is to “identify potential allies among local armed factions and gather intelligence on threats,” the *Washington Post* reported May 12.

While Obama often says he favors drone strikes and the use of “Special Ops” over “boots on the ground,” Washington’s growing presence in Iraq and Syria is resulting in deaths and injuries in combat, which the administration tries to cover up or play down.

Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Charles Keating IV was killed by Islamic State forces near Mosul, Iraq, May 3. U.S. Marine Staff Sgt. Louis Cardin was killed by IS March 19 in northern Iraq, and eight of his fellow Marines were wounded. And Special Forces Master Sgt. Joshua Wheeler was killed there last October.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, in a classic example of doublespeak, said Keating was not on a “combat mission” but “was in a combat situation.”

“It’s a Combat Mission, Mr. President,” was the title of a May 5 *Military Times* editorial condemning “the sort of condescending semantics Washington plays to deny the obvious.”

U.S. imperialism is increasing its military footprint in Libya as Islamic State, which is losing ground in Syria and Iraq, has deployed troops there and captured territory. The reactionary group’s advances are only possible because of the absence of a central government and fracturing of the country into warring factions’ after Washington and its allies unleashed widespread airstrikes on the country that aided the overthrow of the regime of Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

### Social catastrophe in Syria

At the same time Washington increases its troop presence in Syria, it is collaborating with Moscow in an effort to reach a truce and protect its economic and political interests in the region.

The partial cease-fire currently in place threatens to come apart as competing ruling classes from Saudi

Arabia to Turkey and Iran to Israel all maneuver for their own interests.

The social catastrophe working people face keeps getting worse.

Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, who launched a brutal war five years ago seeking to put down mass demonstrations against his rule, is losing support from his base in the western part of the country as cumulative effects of that war cripple the economy.

Rampant inflation is hammering working people. The exchange rate for the Syrian pound has gone from 47 to the dollar in 2011 to 620 per dollar May 10.

Assad has relied on support from the 2.7 million workers in the bloated state sector, more than 10 percent of the pre-war population. Their wages have dropped to \$20-\$30 a month. More than 80 percent of Syrians live below poverty level.

A Damascus teacher spends her monthly pay right away, a May 11 *Financial Times* article reported. “Prices are changing every hour, not every day or month,” she said. Traders close to Assad “may be speeding up the currency’s deterioration by converting their profits back into dollars and moving them abroad,” the article added.

Angry over high prices and the traders’ actions, Syrians in areas under government control planned a three-day boycott of non-essential goods in mid-May.

Syria’s foreign reserves have fallen from \$20 billion before the war to \$700 million, the World Bank reports, and its gross domestic product has been dropping by more than 15 percent a year. The Islamic State takeover of Syria’s eastern oilfields in 2014 cut export revenues from \$4.7 billion to below \$200 million.

Despite an air and ground assault, Iranian forces, Hezbollah troops and Assad loyalists have been unable to recapture Aleppo in northern Syria, formerly the country’s largest city and a stronghold of opposition forces from Islamist groups to the Kurdish People’s Protection Units, which are also battling each other.

In an apparent act of revenge over the Syrian government attacks on Aleppo, the Islamist groups Ahrar al-Sham and al-Qaeda affiliate Nusra Front killed at least 19 civilians May 12, including women and children, in the mostly Alawite Muslim village of al-Zara. The dead are thought to be family members of troops loyal to Assad, whose base is heavily Alawite.

## Verizon strike

**Continued from front page**

non-neutral character of the NLRB.

The Obama administration is intervening in the dispute to press for a settlement. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez convened negotiations between the CWA President Chris Shelton, IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson and Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam in Washington May 15.

Protests at Verizon stores across the country in solidarity with the strikers continue. Most workers at the stores and in Verizon’s wireless division are not unionized; the strike involves workers in the company’s landline, internet and television services.

The CWA is asking other unions to adopt a Verizon store to picket. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is encouraging affiliates to adopt a store and contribute to the strike fund. The Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO lists Verizon picket lines across the area to attend. And the Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO is encouraging unionists to leaflet at three downtown stores.

The Hotel Trades Council here, whose members have joined strikers’ marches, adopted the picket line at 43rd St. and Lexington Ave, where unionists were loudly urging passersby to boycott Verizon when this reporter joined them May 16. “Our members picket every day from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and we’ll be there until the strike is won,” John Turchiano, who edits the hotel workers’ online magazine, said in a phone interview.

“We are one with the 39,000 strong striking workers who walked off their jobs to fight for their rights for decent jobs and benefits,” reads a statement by BIEN Philippines, an organization of call center, payroll and other office workers for companies based outside the Philippines.

BIEN invited a delegation from the CWA, including three strikers, to the Philippines for a four-day solidarity tour. They learned that workers in the call centers there are being forced to work overtime answering calls from Verizon customers that are usually answered by workers who are currently on strike. For the same work done by union members in the U.S., the Philippine workers are paid \$1.78 an hour. A promise from a Verizon representative for an overtime premium of \$1.07 an hour hasn’t showed up in their pay.

During the trip the CWA members were joined by BIEN, the May First Movement Labor Center (KMU), and other local labor groups May 11 in picketing a Teletech call center where Verizon calls are answered. Later that day when the group attempted to meet with Verizon officials at their corporate office, they were told to leave and then followed by a private security group, which called a police SWAT team.

## Crisis in Venezuela

**Continued from page 7**

Maduro said he would ease price controls on some industries to encourage production and would eliminate middlemen in the sale of some subsidized products.

According to the *Washington Post*, in recent weeks there have been incidents of looting during electrical blackouts. AFP news agency reported May 11 that hundreds of people broke into a market in Maracay when they were told there were no subsidized products for sale, carrying off boxes of corn, pasta and oil. The market was guarded by soldiers, after authorities charged that products were being hoarded to sell later at higher prices.

“You can hear the ice cracking,” an unidentified U.S. official told the *Washington Post* at a May 13 “briefing” for selected journalists.

But the pro-imperialist opposition is itself riven by factional disputes and Washington has little confidence in the opposition’s ability to stabilize the political situation, much less find a way out of the hole in the midst of the capitalist economic crisis. And while workers’ support for the Maduro government has eroded, the parties that make up the Roundtable are discredited. Workers know from experience that their talk of democracy and promises to improve the economy are a cover for defending the wealthy capitalists.

In an indication of the U.S. government’s hopes, Reuters reported after the official briefing, that “one ‘plausible’ scenario would be that Maduro’s own party or powerful political figures would force him out and would not rule out the possibility of a military coup.”